IN THE CLAIMS:

The following list replaces all prior versions, and all prior lists, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A friction stir welding method, characterized in thatcomprising:

abutting an end portion in the width direction of a first hollow shape member is abutted against an end portion in the width direction of a second hollow shape member[[;]],

wherein the first hollow shape member comprises two face plates; a first connecting plate for connecting the two plates, at least one end of which is connected to a region other than said end portion; a second connecting plate for connecting said end portions of said face plates that is disposed substantially orthogonal to said face plates; recessed portions formed respectively to connecting portions where said two face plates of said first hollow shape member are each connected with said second connecting plate, each recessed portion opening outward toward both the width direction and the thickness direction of the hollow shape member; a groove or projection formed to one recessed portion; and a groove or projection formed to the other recessed portion[[;]],

wherein the second hollow shape member comprises two face plates[[;]], a first connecting plate for connecting the two face plates of the second hollow shape [illegible] at least one end of which is connected to a region other than said end portion [illegible] projection or groove formed to [illegible] face plate at said end portion of said second hollow shape member; and a projection

or groove formed to the other face plate at said end portion of said second hollow shape member[[;]],

and wherein said projections are each inserted to a corresponding groove, respectively, when said twofirst and second hollow shape members are abutted against each other, at which time one hollow shape member is inserted to the other hollow shape member so as to substantially suppress movement of said hollow shape member in the thickness direction; and

disposing a rotary tool is disposed on thean extension of plate thickness of said second connecting plate, thereby friction stir welding said abutted region from thean outer direction of thickness of said hollow shape members.

2. (Original) A friction stir welding method according to claim 1, wherein said friction stir welding is performed to weld said abutted region, and said grooves and said projections, respectively.

3. – 4. (Cancelled)

5. (Currently Amended) A friction stir welding method according to claim [[4]]33, wherein said grooverecessed portion and said projection isare disposed within the range of diameter of a small-diameter portion of said rotary tool being inserted to said hollow shape memberplates upon performing the friction stir welding

6. (Currently Amended) A friction stir welding method according to claim 533, wherein the central axis of said rotary tool is disposed within the range of depth of said grooverecessed portion upon performing the friction stir welding.

7. – 8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently Amended) A friction stir welding method, characterized in thatcomprising:

abutting an end portion in the width direction of a first hollow shape member is abutted against an end portion in the width direction of a second hollow shape member[[;]],

wherein said first hollow shape member comprises two face plates, said two face plates each having either a groove opening toward the width direction or a projection protruding toward the width direction, formed at one width-direction-end of said first hollow shape member[[;]],

wherein said second hollow shape member comprises two face plates, said two face plates each having either a projection protruding toward the width direction or a groove opening toward the width direction, formed at one width-direction-end of said second hollow shape member[[;]]; and

wherein said projections are each inserted to a corresponding groove, respectively, when said two hollow shape members are abutted against each other; and

friction stir welding

shape members where they abut each other to weld said abutted regions, and said grooves and said projections.

10. (Currently Amended) A friction stir welding method according to claim 9, wherein said groove and said projection ~~is~~are disposed within ~~the~~a range of diameter of a small-diameter portion of ~~said~~a rotary tool being inserted to said first and second hollow shape ~~member~~members upon performing the friction stir welding.

11. (Currently Amended) A friction stir welding method according to claim 10, wherein the central axis of said rotary tool is disposed within ~~the~~a range of depth of said groove upon performing the friction stir welding.

12. (Currently Amended) A friction stir welding method according to claim 9, wherein the central axis of said rotary tool is disposed within ~~the~~a range of depth of said groove upon performing the friction stir welding.

13. – 24 (Cancelled)

25. (New) A friction stir welding method according to claim 1,

wherein each recessed portion includes a protruded block, and

wherein the protruded blocks support respective face plates of the second hollow shape member.

26. (New) A friction stir welding method according to claim 1,

wherein said second hollow shape member does not have a connecting plate substantially orthogonal to the two face plates of the second hollow shape member at said end portion thereof.

27. (New) A friction stir welding method according to claim 1,

wherein said abutting, end surfaces of the face plates are disposed substantially on an extension of the center line of the thickness of the second connecting plate.

28. (New) A friction stir welding method according to claim 1,

wherein thickness of the face plates of the first hollow shape member is greater at the abutted portions of the first hollow shape member to the second hollow shape member than at other portions thereof.

29. (New) A friction stir welding method according to claim 1,

wherein in said disposing said rotary tool, the central axis of the rotary tool is positioned on an extension of plate thickness of the second connecting plate.

30. (New) A friction stir welding method according to claim 1,

wherein the rotary tool includes a small-diameter portion and a large-diameter portion, the small-diameter portion extending beyond the large-diameter portion, and

wherein the rotary tool is disposed such that the small-diameter portion is inserted to a depth beyond the bottom surface of the recessed portion.

31. (New) A friction stir welding method according to claim 1,

wherein the rotary tool is disposed such that during the friction stir welding the projections are plasticized.

32. (New) A friction stir welding method according to claim 25,

wherein the rotary tool is disposed such that during the friction stir welding, each protruded block is plasticized.

33. (New) A friction stir welding method, comprising:

abutting an end portion in the width direction of a first plate against an end portion in the width direction of a second plate,

the first plate including one end having a recessed portion opened outward toward both the width direction and the thickness direction of the first plate, and

the second plate including one end having a projection protruding outward to the width direction of said plate,

said projection of said second plate being inserted to said recessed portion of the first plate when performing said abutting; and

disposing a rotary tool so as to perform friction stir welding at the abutting end portions of the first and second plates by inserting the rotary tool at the abutting end portions from the outer direction of thickness of the first and second plates, the rotary tool being inserted such at a small-diameter portion of the rotary tool extends beyond a bottom surface of the recessed portion.

34. (New) A friction stir welding method according to claim 33,

wherein the first plate further has a groove portion opening outwardly in the width direction of the first plate, said groove portion opening into the recessed portion, and

wherein said projection is inserted to said groove portion when performing said abutting.

35. (New) A friction stir welding method according to claim 34,

wherein both said groove portion and said projection have trapezoidal shapes.

36. (New) A friction stir welding method, comprising:

abutting an end portion in the width direction of a first plate against an end portion in the width direction of a second plate,

the first plate including one end having a groove portion opening outward toward the width direction of the first plate, and

the second plate including one end having a projection protruding outward in the width direction of said second plate,

said projection of said second plate being inserted to said groove portion of the first plate when performing the abutting; and

disposing a rotary tool so as to perform friction stir welding at the abutting end portions of the first and second plates by inserting the rotary tool at the abutting end portions from the outer direction of thickness of the first and second plates.

37. (New) A friction stir welding method according to claim 36,

wherein one of the first plate and the second plate further includes a recessed portion opening both outwardly in the width direction and upwardly in the thickness direction, the groove portion being positioned in the recessed portion where the first plate includes the recessed portion, and the projection being positioned in the recessed portion where the second plate includes the recessed portion.

38. (New) A friction stir welding method according to claim 37,

wherein the other of the first and second plates, other than said one of the first and second plates, does not have a recessed portion, and said other of the first and second plates is positioned in said recessed portion during said abutting.

39. (New) A friction stir welding method according to claim 37,

wherein said rotary tool is inserted to a depth beyond a depth of the lower surface of the recessed portion.

40. (New) A friction stir welding method according to claim 36,

wherein both said groove portion and said projection have trapezoidal shapes.